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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Federal Subsistence Board

1101 E Tudor Rd, MS 121
Anchorage Alaska 99503



Forest Service

SUBSISTENCE FISHING

SPECIAL ACTION

Under Authority of 50 CFR 100.10 and .19
36 CFR 242.10 and .19

Special Action No.:	3-KS-05-14	Issued at:	Bethel, Alaska June 19, 2014
Effective Date:	June 20, 2014 4:00 p.m.		
Expiration Date:	June 20, 2014 8:00 p.m. Unless superseded by subsequent Special Action		

EXPLANATION:

KUSKOKWIM RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES DOWNRIVER OF JOHNSON RIVER

This Special Action opens fishing with gillnets in Federal waters with (set or drift) 6-inch mesh or less, 50 fathoms long, 45 meshes deep for 4 hours, Friday, June 20, 2014 on the Kuskokwim River, DOWNRIVER of the Johnson River. For the Kuskokwim River upriver of the Johnson, regulations restricting gill nets to set gillnets to 4-inch mesh or less, 60' long, and 45 mesh deep are still in effect, as well as the prohibition targeting and retention of Chinook using other subsistence gear types (fish wheels, hook and line, etc.) on the Kuskokwim and its salmon tributaries to the Refuge border at Aniak.

REGULATION

50 CFR 100.27(e)(4)(ii) is amended to read:

50 CFR 100.27 (e)(4)(ii) is modified to allow gillnets with 6-inch mesh or less, no more than 50 fathoms in length and 45 meshes deep from the upriver mouth of the Johnson River at its confluence with the Kuskokwim River downriver to the Refuge boundary. Regulations limiting the gillnet fishery to set nets 4-inch mesh or less, no more than 60' long and 45 mesh deep are still in effect on the Kuskokwim, upriver of the Johnson River. Targeting and retention of Chinook salmon continues to be prohibited upriver of the Johnson River on the Kuskokwim using all other subsistence gear types. Chinook salmon harvested in gillnets upriver of the Johnson River confluence may be retained, however, Chinook caught using all other gear types must be immediately released.

JUSTIFICATION

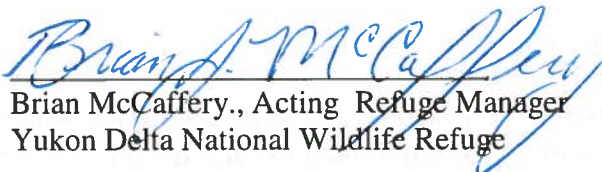
Biological

The 2014 State of Alaska Chinook salmon forecast is for a return of approximately 94,000 fish (range of 71,000-117,000). Given consecutive years of low Chinook salmon escapements, and the inability to achieve escapement goals, conservation regulations have been in place since May 20. The current Bethel Test Fishery (BTF) data suggests that the conservative actions taken to date have allowed substantial numbers to pass the BTF. We expect that the lower management objective for Chinook salmon will be reached if we continue conservative management actions to limit harvests of Chinook salmon while allowing for some harvest of chum and sockeye salmon. The run timing for Chinook salmon appears to have been early with BTF numbers decreasing since approximately June 14. This suggests that the majority of the Chinook salmon will move past the BTF in the next week. The current Bethel Test Fish Data indicates the ratio of chum and sockeye to Chinook continues to increase and is projected to be above 4:1 at the BTF by Friday. Chum and sockeye ratios below Bethel are generally greater 2-4 days prior to arriving at the BTF. Past information from 2010 and 2012 indicate that subsistence catches in the lower river below the Johnson River during this time period have been 25:1 and in some cases 50:1 using 6" mesh nets. These ratios and the use of 6" mesh nets during a limited 4 hour opener is considered a conservative fishing opportunity that will still protect the remaining Chinook salmon. Fishing pressure is not expected to exceed 200 vessels and with the large ratios of chum and sockeye to Chinook salmon the harvest of Chinook salmon will be limited. Harvest will be estimated based upon the total number of boats participating in the fishery. Harvests may be limited by the capacity of families to process the catch.

This management action is in line with the conservation plan discussed with ADF&G, Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, public, Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group, and the tribes of the Kuskokwim River in the previous 9 months.

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

By delegation to:


 Brian McCaffery., Acting Refuge Manager
 Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

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